



## NORTHWEST COLORADO FIRE MANAGEMENT UNIT

### NEWS RELEASE

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#### **Northwest Colorado Fire Management Unit ready for fire season**

Craig, Colo. – The Northwest Colorado Fire Management Unit is fully staffed and prepared for wildland fire response. New fire recruits as well as returning firefighters have been training and refurbishing equipment since mid-May.

Numerous hours are invested in all aspects of preparing fire personnel for fireline duty as crew members. Training includes: fireline safety; weather and fire behavior; leadership responsibilities; team building; fire engine operations; firefighting tactics; and mastering GPS (Global Positioning System) devices for accurate ground navigation. The experienced fire fighters are paired with new crew members as trainers and mentors teaching them the most efficient methods for unrolling hose, mobile attack, fire size up and other basic duties. Drills to increase proficiency in handling equipment and response time have been occurring at Loudy Simpson Park and Cedar Mountain the past few weeks.

Guidance and leader's intent is also offered to fire personnel from agency and fire management officers regarding land management practices and issues. Important concerns, such as sage grouse, may impact fire suppression decisions and tactics and all fire personnel need to be aware of special considerations. However, safety to public and fire fighters is always the number one priority regardless of other existing issues.

"The time spent preparing for the coming fire season is imperative for quick and efficient fire management," said acting Fire Management Officer Jim Michels. "These refreshers and classes are annual events that keep our fire fighting forces current with qualifications and increase their skills whether it's learning to operate a chain saw or decision making on the fire line. The seasonal fire outlook for Colorado this year is predicting an average fire occurrence, but that still means wildfires are in the forecast. We always prepare for the worst case scenario."

Preparing for fire season also includes the Craig Interagency Dispatch Center. Updating contact lists and ensuring agreements and protocols are in place are vital to incident response.

Morning briefings began Monday, June 2. These daily updates are for all agency and cooperating fire responders which keep them abreast of available resources, weather and fire activity.

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Note: 2013-Northwest Colorado Fire Management Unit responded to 224 fires for 5,929 acres